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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

27 October 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Actions of
Front Aviation in the First Front Offensive
Operation in the Initial Period of War

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article is a discussion of a various aspects of air operations in an offensive. The authors argue that the operational disposition of air forces for a strike should be constant, regardless of time of day and weather conditions, and that dispersal to alternate basing must be accomplished prior to combat. A major portion of the article is devoted to the concept of air support, which the authors conclude has lost its significance, preferring to define air tasks in terms of targets to be destroyed and capabilities in relation to other means available to a front. Fighter-interceptors are considered basic to field air defense, which should be the responsibility of the air army commander. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962.

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2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

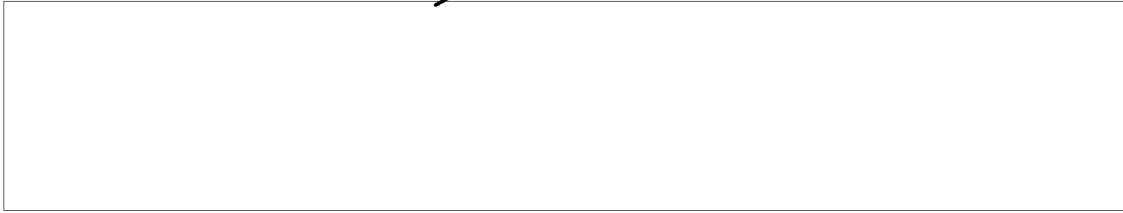
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF Early 1962
INFO.

DATE

27 October 1976

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Actions of Front Aviation in the
First Front Offensive Operation in the Initial Period of War

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The authors of this article are General-Mayor of Aviation S. Shimanskiy and General-Mayor of Aviation V. Povarkov. This article is a discussion of a various aspects of air operations in an offensive. The authors argue that the operational disposition of air forces for a strike should be constant, regardless of time of day and weather conditions, though the echelons within the disposition may vary with the situation, and that dispersal to alternate basing must be accomplished prior to combat. A major portion of the article is devoted to the concept of air support, which the authors conclude has lost its significance, preferring to define air tasks in terms of targets to be destroyed and capabilities in relation to other means available to a front. Fighter-interceptors are considered basic to field air defense, which should be the responsibility of the air army commander. Combat with enemy reserves, aerial reconnaissance, airborne landings, air transport, and the combat make-up of the air army, also are touched upon.

End of Summary

Comment:

After 1962 the SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.

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Actions of Front Aviation in the First Front Offensive
Operation in the Initial Period of War

by

General-Mayor of Aviation S. ShimanskiyGeneral-Mayor of Aviation V. Povarkov

The adoption into service of nuclear weapons as the chief means of defeating the enemy, the development of different means of delivering them to target, and also the widespread introduction of radioelectronic equipment into all control processes, are not only radically changing our former notions about armed combat on the whole and the conduct of front operations, but they also require a new organization of the combat actions of troops, including the front aviation, based on different principles than they were before.

Determining the most expedient forms of employment and methods of combat actions of front aviation in present-day operations has great significance for the theory of the operational art of the air forces and the practice of combat training of troops. Therefore, discussing them on the pages of the periodical press is extremely useful. We consider it desirable to further refine some of the positions expressed earlier by certain authors* and give a broader interpretation to a number of them.

Front aviation, in the operations of the initial period of a war, is capable of influencing in the most decisive manner the success of repulsing an enemy air attack in the zone of operations of the front troops, and of participating in the delivery of the initial nuclear strike against the enemy as part of the forces and means of the front.

When there is danger of a war being unleashed by an aggressor, the constant readiness of front aviation for immediate actions takes on special significance; it is achieved by the high level of training of flight personnel, organization of airfield and airborne alert, maintenance of aircraft materiel and armament in readiness for immediate combat employment, establishment of continuous alert status for the combat crews of command posts and also for radiotechnical means, and timely dispersal of the aviation with early accomplishment of the measures that ensure orderly commitment to battle of all allocated forces and means organized into

* Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", 1961, No. 5
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definite operational groupings.

In a sudden enemy attack, the repulse of his massed air raid and delivery of the initial nuclear strike against the enemy as a rule have to be carried out simultaneously. The combat actions of the air army in this case will be extremely intensive as a consequence of the necessity of simultaneously hitting numerous air and ground targets which are quite varied in character under complex conditions in a situation which is not entirely clear. In this connection, the success of the combat actions of the front aviation will depend above all on the degree of their organization, of which high combat readiness and also orderly commitment of all forces taking part in the accomplishment of the whole complex of tasks form the basis.

Rather than deal with the questions connected with the organization of combat actions and the maintenance of their combat readiness, let us examine only the measures that ensure the most orderly commitment of all the forces of the air army for delivery of the initial strike, taking into consideration its simultaneous participation in repelling the air enemy and its operational disposition in accomplishing these tasks.

It is understood that the tasks connected with repelling the air enemy and delivering the initial strike will be accomplished by the air army in a definite operational disposition, whose variants are worked out already in peacetime. However, in our opinion, one should not adhere to that point of view according to which the operational disposition of an air army represents a single whole uniting all its forces and means participating in the first operation of the initial period of a war. We consider it more logical to look at the operational disposition of the air army in relation to the nature and content of the tasks to be accomplished by it. Only such an approach will make it possible to correctly identify the essence of the operational disposition of the air army and the mission of each of its elements.

As we know, the operational disposition of the aviation represents the distribution in the air of forces and means that have the objective of accomplishing a definite operational task and are united by a common concept.

From this, in our opinion, correct definition, it is obvious that an air army cannot have a single operational disposition that would include both the forces participating in repelling the raid by enemy winged means of attack and the forces participating in the initial nuclear strike. The

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actions of the air army from the beginning of the war will be directed, in essence, toward the accomplishment of two tasks which, though interrelated, are different in their content. This being the case, the accomplishment of each of them pursues its own individual goal and is attained by employing completely different forces and means, requiring a totally distinct grouping of them, and it rests on the system of cooperation peculiar to these forces alone. Thus, in repelling a sudden massed raid by an air enemy, the operational disposition is based on missile-carrying fighter-interceptors, but in delivering the initial nuclear strike, it is based on nuclear weapons delivery aircraft and cruise missiles. In the course of repelling an incursion by air, cooperation of the fighters of the air army is organized with the air defense means of the front and the air defense forces of the country, while in delivering the initial nuclear strike, the actions of the strike forces are most fully coordinated with the strikes of the strategic means, the efforts of the ground forces, and also with the actions of the front means of radioelectronic countermeasures.

The operational disposition of the forces of the air army for repelling the air enemy at the beginning of military operations is based on the idea of commitment by echelon of the maximum number of the forces of the fighter aviation to the farthest limits for intercepting targets. The strength of the echelons of the front fighters is determined not so much by the readiness of the fighter aviation for an immediate raid as by the capabilities of the air army for simultaneous guidance of its forces in the air. Also having an influence on the strength of the echelons is the nature of enemy actions. Experience gained from the exercises of the NATO air forces shows that the greatest intensity of the raid by enemy tactical aviation will occur in the first hours after the beginning of war. Naturally, to repel such an incursion will require commitment in the very briefest time periods of all the forces of our air defense, including the fighter aviation of the front. However, due to the conditions for guidance of fighters, such a decision may be undesirable. If there are in the air army three division command posts and nine regimental command posts equipped with automated control systems, the capability for simultaneous guidance constitutes up to 30 to 40 groups or individual aircraft against the same number of targets. Therefore, putting a larger complement of fighter forces into the air will lead to part of them not being provided with guidance and carrying out a sortie for nothing. These limitations necessitate putting fighters up only in echelon and committing them to battle successively, at first from zones of airborne alert at the maximum distance from the national border over enemy territory (70 kilometers and more), and then from readiness no. 1 and 2. Consequently, the order and

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sequence of the actions of the fighter echelons are determined by the capabilities of the air army for guiding its own fighters.

The operational disposition of the forces of the air army participating in the delivery of the initial nuclear strike will be completely different. It must respond to a different concept of actions and, to a greater degree, ensure reliable hitting of the ground targets to be destroyed by the initial nuclear strike of the front.

The operational disposition of the strike forces of the air army will be based on the idea of delivering a crushing blow simultaneously with all ready forces and means. In this case, the complement of forces may be varied and be determined basically by the situation in which combat actions occur. Thus, the presence of a threat situation will allow having in readiness for immediate actions nearly all the bomber and fighter-bomber aviation and the cruise missile units. But in case of a surprise enemy attack, they will also have to be committed piecemeal in several echelons.

But it is not only the number of forces participating in a strike that is of decisive importance to the operational disposition. The effectiveness of the strike will largely be determined by how thoroughly the actions of the forces of the air army are supported with reconnaissance data on strike targets and also with measures for negotiating enemy air defense. Therefore, it is necessary to have, at a definite level of readiness, forces for final reconnaissance of strike targets, and also forces to perform radioelectronic countermeasures and to neutralize the control posts of the enemy means of air attack and air defense. In the operational disposition, they must form the air army's first echelon, whose chief mission consists in combat support of the forces actually delivering the strike. Forming the second and third echelons may be groups of fighter-bombers, bombers, and cruise missiles, and also groups of their support and poststrike reconnaissance aircraft. These echelons are committed to action simultaneously with or after the first. Thus, in the operational disposition of the strike forces, there is no fighter aviation except that which operates in the complement of the strike echelons.

We agree with the widespread opinion that a change in the conditions of carrying out the initial strike calls for corresponding changes in the operational disposition, therefore it cannot be cut and dried. Thus, it may be realistic to commit all the strike forces of the air army to action at once without in this case creating any echelons. But it would not do to exclude altogether such conditions wherein the actions of the air army will take the form of strikes successively delivered by various echelons. And

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even so, advance determination of the operational disposition is absolutely necessary. Only under this condition is it possible to count on the best organized commitment of all forces and means taking part in the initial strike, and hence on the strike's effectiveness.

In determining the operational disposition of the air army, besides the various conditions under which combat actions may occur, one must also take into consideration the effect of the time of day and weather conditions in which the strike is carried out. It is known that the training level of the flight personnel and the equipping of the aircraft affect the operational and combat capabilities of the air army when it is operating at night and in adverse weather conditions. This makes it necessary to reallocate the strike targets, particularly among the fighter-bombers and bombers. Therefore, in order to avoid complicating the organization of the strike and ensure the greatest simplicity of actions, it appears to us that the operational disposition of the grouping of forces participating in the strike must be the same, irrespective of the time of day and weather conditions. Only the complement of forces of the echelons participating in the strike can be changed, which should be taken into consideration in determining the quantity of tasks to be accomplished in each specific case.

Thus, the grouping of forces, their strength and varied operational disposition are dictated above all by the nature of the tasks to be accomplished by the air army, and also by the conditions of the situation. The varied operational disposition will take into fullest consideration the special characteristics of the combat readiness of the heterogeneous forces of the air army and the specific nature of the tasks to be accomplished by them. This is confirmed by the practice of troop exercises, which shows that only under this condition is it possible in the very shortest periods to achieve the most orderly commitment to battle of all forces and means of the air army and ensure stable control of them.

Let us cite one more circumstance in favor of these comments. The unsoundness of the idea of a single operational disposition of all the forces and means of the air army becomes particularly apparent in the case in which the delivery of the initial nuclear strike and the repelling of the enemy incursion are going to be accomplished not simultaneously, but successively. Naturally, in this case, the strike forces and the repelling forces cannot make up a single operational disposition of the air army in the air.

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Connected with the question considered above regarding the operational disposition of aviation in the air is the question of moving it out from under the initial enemy nuclear strike. We cannot agree with the opinion which is treated in the literature and is current in the practice of operational training of air formations concerning the possible procedure for rebasing the forces of the fighter aviation at the beginning of combat actions. It appears to us that one of the most important measures for preserving the aviation will be to disperse it to alternate, in the majority of cases dirt, airfields not previously known to the enemy and the timely take-off of aircraft from them in moving out from under a nuclear strike. In all cases it is necessary to strive toward putting the maximum amount of forces of the fighter aviation into the air at the beginning of combat actions rather than holding them in reserve at airfields for subsequent actions. The slightest delay in taking off may lead to heavy losses of fighters still on the ground as a result of an enemy nuclear strike. In connection with this, the question as to the time and procedure for transferring fighters to the dispersal airfields is of special interest.

The opinion exists that the first take-off of front fighters has to be carried out from permanent airfields and that the fighters must be rebased to dirt airfields only after they have fulfilled their tasks of repelling the initial enemy air raid. Such a recommendation, in our opinion, does not take into consideration all the diversity of conditions which can arise in the initial period of a war. One must not proceed only on the assumption that in all cases the time of delivery of the enemy strike will necessarily be known to us and that therefore we will always be able to bring all the forces of our fighters into full combat readiness and thereby ensure they take off on time. These recommendations are justified only in case the enemy carries out a strike on our airfields with winged means of attack.

But what will happen if the enemy unexpectedly delivers a strike on the airfields with ballistic missiles? In this case, basically only the fighters on alert will be able to move out from under the nuclear strikes, and then not always, while all the rest probably will be caught on the airfields and destroyed. After all, it is no secret that peacetime airfields, especially those which have paved runways, are prime targets for enemy nuclear strikes. Therefore, it should be considered more correct to remove the fighter aviation, as well as the other large units of the air army, to dispersal airfields at the very first opportunity, without waiting for a sortie to repel the enemy. Simultaneously with this, it is necessary to take steps to deceive the enemy as to the true basing of the air army.

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On the airfields abandoned by the aviation it is obligatory to simulate life, creating in the enemy confidence that the basing of our aviation grouping is unchanged. Such a measure will unquestionably help preserve the aviation of the front.

A most important question in the theory of operational art of the air forces is determination of the tasks of front aviation. Instead of sharing the opinion of certain generals and officers who suggest that all the tasks accomplished by the air army (with the exception of covering troops and transporting troops and cargo by air) be regarded as one task, air support of troops, we believe that singling out air support of troops as the independent and sole task in the joint actions of the air army and the troops of the front, lacks sense entirely. Not only does it not reflect the true character of the combat actions of the aviation, but it contradicts the basic principles of employing it and especially the principles of employing nuclear weapons in the operations of the front.

As is known, the concept "air support of troops of the front" remains as a legacy from the time of the Great Patriotic War. Then it reflected the character of the operational employment of front aviation. In one instance, air corps or divisions of the air army were placed in operational subordination to the commanders of the combined-arms or tank armies and conducted combat actions according to their direct instructions (orders). The commander and staff of the air army retained functions of a supply and administrative nature. In an other instance, air corps and divisions of the air army conducted combat actions in support of combined-arms and tank formations, organizing cooperation as they did so on the principle of air support. The problems of organizing and conducting the combat actions of the aviation were dealt with directly by the commander and staff of the air army. Thus, in neither of these instances in the period of the Great Patriotic War was air support a task of the air army of the front; it only represented a principle of the combat employment of aviation. Therefore, in the combat documents being drawn up, and especially on questions of the cooperation of the aviation with the troops of the front, it was specially indicated that the large units and units of the air army fulfilled the tasks assigned them in support of troops on the principle of air support.

It is utterly incomprehensible why, in present-day conditions, such uncertainty has appeared in the "air support" concept, which not only leads to an arbitrary interpretation of the tasks to be accomplished by the air^{50X1-HUM} army of the front, but is also the source of incorrect views on the operational role and place of the air army in the first offensive operation of the front in the initial period of war.

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Indeed, the very term "air support" as the task of the air army is in turn also interpreted variously. Some consider air support to include the set of tasks to be accomplished by the air army in support of a combined-arms (tank) army using the flight resources and nuclear warheads allocated to this or that army by the commander of the front. In this case, the tasks of the aviation are assigned according to time and strike targets by the commander of the army being supported, and the role of the commander of the air army is reduced to providing for these combat actions. Others, on the contrary, include in this concept, as has been indicated, all the tasks accomplished by the air army in support of the troops of the front in an operation, with the exception of aerial reconnaissance, cover of troops and installations of the rear of the front, and also air transport of troops and cargo.

A comparison of these extreme points of view shows that air support of the troops of the front is limited in the one case to the framework of aviation combat actions directly in support of the corresponding combined-arms (tank) army, while in the other case it includes all the tasks carried out by the air army in support of the troops of the front.

The unsoundness of such judgments is perfectly obvious. In reality, if air support is made to depend on the resources allocated to an army, then it is possible to come to the conclusion that there may or may not be air support, depending on whether or not flight resources are allocated to this or that army to accomplish tasks according to its plan. Really, though, the offensive of the troops of a front is always carried out in the closest cooperation with the aviation. The combat actions of the air army are planned and implemented primarily and principally in support of the troops of the front and the operation as a whole, and its specific tasks are derived from the nature of the targets to be destroyed or neutralized by it; control of aviation is strictly centralized and carried out by the commander of the air army.

As regards the second tendency -- to regard all the combat actions of the air army in the first offensive operation of the front as one task, air support -- this, in our opinion, clearly contradicts the true role of the air army which is rightly set aside for it in the operation of the front. And, what is more, this converts it, in essence, into a supporting branch arm. But, in fact, the air army of the front is meant to carry out tasks of destroying enemy missile/nuclear and aviation groupings, neutralizing his reserves, control posts, and other targets both independently and in cooperation with the other branch arms of the front and especially with the operational-tactical rocket troops.

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The air army, employing nuclear warheads of varying yield in combating enemy means of nuclear attack and his reserves can independently accomplish operational-tactical tasks within the framework of the operation of the front. The tendency to reduce all the tasks carried out by the air army in the first offensive operation of the front in the initial period of war to air support alone is unsound, just as it would be unsound to reduce the combat tasks of the operational-tactical missiles to missile support of the troops of the front.

The understanding of air support as an independent task of the air army also contradicts the principle of nuclear weapons employment in the first operation of the front. Nuclear weapons, as is known, are the main fire means in defeating the enemy and creating favorable conditions for the ground troops to defeat the enemy groupings conclusively and achieve the objective of the operation. The actions of the troops of the front come down to skilfully exploiting the results of the nuclear strikes delivered by the aviation and the rocket troops of the front. That is, the main fire means in defeating the enemy are nuclear weapons (incidentally, the air army in the first operation of the front can employ up to 30 percent of the nuclear warheads out of the total number issued to the front). Therefore, tasks to be accomplished with the utilization of nuclear weapons cannot be subordinate, and nuclear weapons cannot be transformed from the main means of the troops to a secondary means of supporting them. Consequently, there are grounds for considering that air support as a term and more so as a task of the air army has lost its significance under present conditions.

As regards the combat actions of the air army in the first offensive operation of a front, we consider it advisable to formulate the tasks of the air army in terms of the nature of the targets to be destroyed (neutralized) and not to regard them as air support, i.e., this must be done just as it is approached in the other branch arms. After all, nobody speaks of missile support of combined-arms large units and formations. But the assignment of tasks to the air army and fulfilment of them does not differ in form and content from the assignment and fulfilment of tasks by the rocket troops of the front.

In repelling the air attack of the enemy, in delivering the initial nuclear strike, and also during the offensive of the troops of the front, the most important tasks of the air army may be destruction of the enemy means of nuclear attack, combat with his aviation in the air and on airfields, conduct of aerial reconnaissance, and airlifting of troops and cargo. 50X1-HUM

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It is known that one of the conditions for success of the troops of the front, especially in the first operation, is continuous and highly effective combat with winged means of attack. The combat actions of front troops, especially in the first front operation, will take place under conditions of extraordinarily aggressive actions of enemy aviation and cruise missiles. It can be said with certainty that if we cannot weaken the enemy aviation in the first operation, and seize and hold the initiative of actions in the air, then the front will hardly be able to fulfil the task assigned to it. Therefore, from the first hours of war, the front aviation is faced with the task of destroying, jointly with the rocket and ground troops of the front, the enemy means of air attack on the ground and in the air. The predominant method of combating enemy aviation should be considered destroying it on the airfields.

The most complex task for the front aviation, in our opinion, will be the destruction of the numerous enemy means of nuclear attack in concealed disposition over a large territory. The possibility of hitting enemy operational-tactical missiles and atomic artillery will depend on when they are detected and what the probability of bracketing them is. The basic difficulty lies in destroying these means even before they are employed by the enemy. But to do this is extraordinarily complicated. For the time that missiles are in launching positions is limited (not more than one to two hours), and therefore their destruction by our missiles is hampered to a certain extent in view of the slow processing and prolonged passage of reconnaissance data on the exact coordinates of strike targets.

This task is accomplished more successfully by aviation, which, as we know, does not need exact target coordinates. The basic means of hitting mobile, small-size targets will be fighter-bombers. Aircraft of this type can conduct independent search in an area (zone) assigned to them and are capable of quickly detecting enemy missile/nuclear means and attacking them right there, employing various, but mainly conventional, means of destruction. Along with fighter-bombers, to accomplish these tasks, the missile-carrying bomber aviation of the air army of the front will also find widespread application.

As regards destruction of delivery aircraft, the chief strike means of the enemy, in the air, this task is accomplished on the distant approaches by the missile-carrying fighter aviation. In this connection, the opinion that the fighter aviation has lost its superiority over surface-to-air guided missiles in intercepting the air enemy on the distant approaches to the front line, is utterly unfounded. In confirmation the argument is advanced that, given the existing relative speeds of the air target and a

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fighter, it supposedly is impossible to attack the target before the zone of surface-to-air guided missile fire on it, and actions of fighters in the same zone with surface-to-air missiles is excluded with the existing means of control. Therefore, they say, employing fighters to intercept air targets on distant approaches is now impossible and their actions in this zone only reduce the effectiveness of surface-to-air means.

Such a view of the role of fighter aviation is the result of an incorrect assessment of existing aviation equipment and the prospects for its further development. At the present time, there are known to be models of fighter-mounted intercept and aiming radars with a detection range of up to 185 kilometers and ground radars with a guidance range up to 400 kilometers. Development of more perfect models of radiotechnical means, together with improvement of recognition devices and automation of control processes, is expanding more and more the field of the employment of fighters in combat with winged means of attack. Also contributing to this, obviously, will be the employment of radar picket aircraft to increase the range of detection of low-flying targets. The fighter aviation, carrying out wide maneuvering, is able to reach the flight path of the hostile aviation, to find and hit air targets independently before the zone of the surface-to-air missile troops, as well as jointly with the surface-to-air missile troops in a single zone, operating at all their flight altitudes.

All this testifies to the fact that the front fighter-interceptors continue to remain the basic means of field air defense, and use of them at the front level must be centralized in the closest cooperation with the other means of air defense.

At the present time, fighters, surface-to-air and radiotechnical means of air defense of the front are disassociated and subordinate to various commanders. This does not ensure timeliness of reporting on the enemy, it hampers the allocation of targets among the means of air defense, increases the amount of time the air defense system requires to get ready to repel an attack, and hampers control, especially under conditions of a massed enemy air raid, which, naturally, lowers the effectiveness of the actions of each of the air defense means as well as the entire air defense system of the front as a whole.

To raise its effectiveness, field air defense needs, in our opinion, some organizational restructuring, in particular, subordination of all the air defense means of the front to the commander of the air army. This will let us free ourselves of unnecessary coordination in the employment of various air defense means and base their control on the principle of

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subordination.

Another important task of the front aviation is combat with the reserves of the enemy, which, especially in the first front operation, the rocket troops and aviation can accomplish. However, under modern conditions, this combat is considerably complicated by the fact that troops are situated in dispersed locations over a considerable area and hitting the numerous small-size and mobile targets with nuclear weapons is not very effective. To boot, regrouping of troops will be carried out, as a rule, under cover of darkness or in adverse weather conditions, which creates additional difficulties in employing missiles to combat them because of the inevitable delay of reconnaissance data. The air army of the front, employing chemical and conventional means of destruction, can successfully hit the enemy reserves both in concentration areas and on the move, and also prohibit the airlifting of troops by destroying transport aircraft (helicopters) on airfields and in the air.

Aerial reconnaissance is most important to the successful attainment of the objectives of the first front operation. In the absence of effective aerial reconnaissance, even missile/nuclear weapons cannot produce the desired results. One of the basic means of obtaining reconnaissance data is the front aviation.

A special characteristic of the organization of aerial reconnaissance in the first operation of the initial period of war consists in the fact that it is, as a rule, planned with the idea of conducting it yet in peacetime, in the period of threat (if there is one), and with the beginning of combat actions. In peacetime not all means and methods of aerial reconnaissance can be employed. Before the beginning of combat actions, aerial reconnaissance will be conducted with the utilization of airborne radiotechnical means by flights of reconnaissance aircraft along the national border over our own territory, and also over neutral waters. In a period of threat, besides this, with special authorization, individual flights that violate the national border may be carried out for the purpose of reconnaissance of the most important enemy targets.

Especially intensive aerial reconnaissance must begin with the start of combat actions in order to get the most data possible about the enemy in the shortest time. This will require, from the very first hours of war, maximum efforts by all its forces and means. The data on the enemy obtained as a result of the first sortie of the reconnaissance aviation will be the basis for building up the strength of the initial nuclear strike with the forces and means of the front.

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The first offensive operation of the front is also characterized by the fact that, in order to ensure high rates of advance, airborne landings and airlifts of troops and cargo will be widely employed. It stands to reason that fulfilment of this task is inconceivable without modern air transport. The scale on which it is employed can be judged if only by the fact that for the landing of just one airborne division in one trip (transportable weight 2,400 tons) it takes eight to ten regiments of AN-8 and AN-12 aircraft. Besides that, aviation transport is the main means of delivering nuclear warheads and missiles, and also various cargoes to the troops of front formations. The experience of exercises shows that, for only one tank army at a rate of advance of up to 100 kilometers per day, on the third day of the operation it already will be necessary to air deliver not less than 2,000 to 3,000 tons of various cargoes. This task could be accomplished by four military transport divisions.

From the examination of the nature of the combat actions of the air army and the tasks to be accomplished by it in the first operation of the front, it follows that it is very important to the achievement of the objective of the operation by the troops of the front. The value of the front aviation is not only in its great range, speed, flight altitude, and cargo capacity, but chiefly in its capability for independently searching out targets, hitting them right there, and observing the results of its strike. This most valuable quality makes aviation a most important means in the conduct of the first offensive operation of the front in the initial period of war.

For accomplishing its tasks, the air army must have the necessary forces and means at its disposal. It is known that the basic means of destruction are nuclear warheads. Therefore, success in fulfilling the tasks to be accomplished by the air army will depend above all on the quantity of nuclear warheads allocated for accomplishing each of them, and, in actions with chemical and conventional means of destruction -- on the combat strength of the air army. The capabilities for aerial reconnaissance are also determined by the combat strength.

It is known, for instance, that in order to conduct reconnaissance in the first operation of the initial period of war, it takes on the average up to 300 to 400 aircraft sorties per day for operational and tactical reconnaissance, and in the first days of the operation, even more than that. In order to carry out the indicated number of sorties (on the average, for conducting operational reconnaissance -- two, and for tactical reconnaissance -- three sorties per day), an air army, counting non-T/O reconnaissance squadrons, must have in its complement (coefficient of

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combat readiness 0.8) up to two operational and two tactical reconnaissance regiments (besides the reconnaissance squadrons of the combined-arms and tank armies). And still, besides these forces, for aerial reconnaissance in the first days of the operation, it will be required to allocate part of the forces of the combat aviation with the expenditure of up to 30 percent of its flight resources.

In combating mobile and small-size targets, for the destruction of which the employment of missiles is inadvisable (by virtue of the low probability of hitting them), fighter-bombers and bombers will be employed. An exceptionally effective means of combating mobile and small-size targets will be the fighter-bomber aviation with SU-7B aircraft. Employing nuclear bombs and free rockets of the air-to-surface class with conventional warheads, and also combining chemical and conventional bombs and cannon fire, the fighter-bombers can, with timeliness and effectiveness, hit designated targets in the tactical and immediate operational depth and thereby assist the ground troops in the fulfilment of their assigned tasks at high rates of advance. Calculation shows that, given the existing number of rocket troops in a front, this requires having in the complement of the air army not less than two or three air divisions of fighter-bombers, and for combat with the enemy means of nuclear attack and his reserves in the operational depth -- a bomber air division. The basic task of the bomber aviation will be to combat the enemy nuclear attack installations and reserves situated beyond the range of fire of the army and front missiles.

Thus, in the combat make-up of the air army it is necessary to have not less than six to seven air divisions, up to six separate air regiments, and two to three cruise missile regiments, including among these numbers three air divisions of fighters, two to three divisions of fighter-bombers, a division of bombers, two regiments each of operational and tactical reconnaissance, a regiment of spotters, and a SPETSNAZ radar regiment. Naturally, the listed make-up of the air army must not be regarded as invariable and suitable for whatever conditions. It is calculated in conformity with the conditions of the Western Theater of Military Operations. In operations in other theaters (wooded-swampy, mountainous-desert) the combat make-up of the air army will be different. Thus, under the conditions of a mountainous theater (difficult basing of aviation and preparation of airfields during an operation), it is required to have, in the combat make-up of the air army, aircraft with a wide operating radius. Besides that, the complex relief of the terrain in a mountainous theater limits the employment of cruise missiles, and their tasks have to be accomplished by bomber aviation. Consequently, in the

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combat make-up of an air army operating in a mountainous theater, there must be more bombers than fighter-bombers. In the Polar Region, where surface-to-air missile cover of troops and rear installations of the front against enemy air strikes is hampered, and favorable conditions for his aviation to maneuver from the sea are brought about, it is advisable to have greater forces of fighter aviation in the make-up of the air army.

It should be taken into consideration that, during a war, the combat make-up of the air army will change considerably. Therefore, determining it correctly, depending on the conditions of a specific theater and taking into consideration the other conditions of the situation, is of exceptionally great importance to the success of the combat actions of the air army, and consequently, to the success of the actions of the troops of the front in the operation.

Such, in our opinion, are some of the propositions determining the nature of the combat actions of the air army, its mission and tasks in the first offensive operation of a front in the initial period of war.

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